LOUISIANA Conservationist

November/December 2001 $2.50

2002 Rabbit Forecast

Spotting Birds in the Gulf

Dedicated to the conservation and restoration of Louisiana's natural resources.
Published by the Public Information Section of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Now is a time of year that brings family and friends together to celebrate the holiday spirit. In the wake of recent disasters, we have seen the rebirth of our nation's renowned spirit and its ability to flourish and stand strong. Just as our nation's loyalty grows stronger, so do we at the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries with a steadfast commitment to conserve and protect our natural resources. Join us as we look forward to 2002 with a spirit of hope, joy and most of all, peace. A Joyous Holiday and Peaceful New Year from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

James H. Jenkins Jr.

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Published by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in the interest of conservation of Louisiana natural resources.

Louisiana Conservationist
ISSN 0024-6778
Volume 53, No. 6
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

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The Louisiana Conservationist is published bimonthly except January/February by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, 225/765-2918. Periodical postage paid at Baton Rouge, LA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Louisiana Conservationist, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

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This public document was published at an average cost of $51,751.60. Approximately 27,000 copies of this document were published at an average printing cost of $23,910.44. The total cost of all printing of this document averages $23,910.44. This document was published for Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, LSU Graphic Services, to provide information on outdoor opportunities in Louisiana. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

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Cottontails and Canecutters

Rabbits are one of the most commonly encountered and widely distributed wild mammals in Louisiana. They are found in our coastal marshes, swamps, bottomland forests, upland pine forests, and even in our parks and neighborhoods. Rabbits thrive in such a wide array of habitats because their needs are relatively simple. They require areas of weedy herbaceous cover with nearby escape sites such as briar patches or woody thickets. Something as simple as a thicket resulting from a fallen tree in the forest or a weedy roadside can be rabbit habitat.

STORY BY DAVID MORELAND, FRED KIMMEL & ANDY DEROSA

In Louisiana, we have two species of rabbits. The cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) is the most widespread, and occurs most frequently on upland sites with open habitat such as field and pasture borders, clearcuts, weedy fields, and along the edges of forest land. Swamp rabbits (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*), as the name implies, tend to be found in wetland habitats such as swamps, marshes, and wooded bottomlands. In some parts of the state swamp rabbits are referred to as "canecutters."

Although they are similar in appearance, there are some physical differences that separate cottontails from swamp rabbits. Swamp rabbits are the larger of the two species, weighing 3 - 6.5 pounds, compared to 1.5-3.5 pounds for cottontails. Cottontails tend to be grayish to reddish brown along their back and sides. They also have pale cream-colored rings around their eyes and the top of their hind feet tend to be whitish. In contrast, swamp rabbits are browner and have more splashes of black on their backs and sides. Their eye ring is darker as is the top of their hind feet.

The life of a rabbit is short and full of danger. Rabbits are prime fare for a variety of predators, such as hawks, owls, bobcats, coyotes, foxes, snakes and even domestic dogs and cats. Young rabbits are particularly vulnerable and often die before they leave their nests. Nests consist of grass and fur lined depressions in the ground and are usually found in dense stands of grass. Litters of rabbits still in the nest are often lost due to drowning or chilling following heavy rains. Human activities such as mowing are also responsible for the loss of many nests. In addition, rabbits are an important game species. In Louisiana about 60,000 rabbit hunters take approximately 500,000 rabbits each year.

Despite all the hazards rabbits face, they seem to abound year after year. They do so by compensating for their high death rate with a high birth rate. For instance, in Louisiana both cottontails and swamp rabbits can breed year-round and young can be found nearly every month of the year. A female cottontail rabbit can have multiple (up to six) litters in a year and litters average about four young each.

The ability of rabbits to utilize a wide variety of foods is another reason rabbits are abundant and widespread. Rabbits are not picky eaters, so lack of food is seldom a factor in limiting Louisiana's rabbit populations. Rabbits eat a variety of grasses, forbs (herbaceous plants other than grasses and sedges) and woody vegetation. Selection varies by abundance and season. During spring and summer, succulent new growth of grasses and clovers, as well as, blackberry, dewberry, greenbriar, and a wide variety of forbs are eaten. In fall and winter, rabbits eat honeysuckle, blackberry, dewberry, cool season grasses and forbs, and even bark of some species. Swamp rabbits can use an even wider variety of foods, with emergent aquatic vegetation added to the list. When feeding, rabbits cut plant stems at a nice 45 degree angle which distinguishes it from the irregular shaped cut made by deer.

Rabbits are very efficient in their use of food. Rabbits expel both brown and green pellets from their digestive tract. The dry, brown pellets are feces from which all the available nutrients have been removed. The moist, green pellets contain only partially digested food. These green pellets are often re-eaten, and in effect, recycled until all the nutrients are utilized.

A recent research project focused attention on Louisiana's rabbits and confirmed findings of some early researchers. During the late winter of 2000, a study was initiated between LDWF and the Department of Veterinary Science at LSU to determine the seasonal prevalence and developmental pattern of the rabbit stomach worm *Obeliscoides cuniculi*. This parasite would serve as a model for molecular studies of the cattle parasite *Ostertagia ostertagi*, which is the most economically important pathogenic gastrointestinal nematode in gulf coast cattle production systems.

One hundred and ninety eight feral rabbits were collected monthly from February

When feeding, rabbits cut plant stems at a forty-five degree angle which distinguishes it from the irregular shaped cut made by deer.

Photo by David Moreland

Photo by Ike Radley

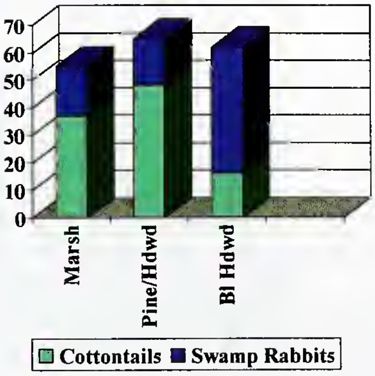
2000 through February 2001. The Deer Study Section of LDWF coordinated the collection of rabbits. In southwest LA, Region 5 wildlife biologists, John Robinette, Wendell Smith, and Mike Berg, collected rabbits from the marsh habitat in Cameron Parish. Region 6 biologist Tony Vidrine and area personnel from Sherburne WMA, collected rabbits from the bottomland hardwood habitat around Sherburne WMA. In the mixed pine/hardwood habitat of East Feliciana Parish, Region 7 biologists Chris Davis and Emile LeBlanc, assisted with the rabbit collection on this habitat site. A few additional rabbits were collected on Bens Creek WMA, Jackson-Bienville WMA, and Ouachita WMA.

This parasite study was the first research done on Louisiana rabbits in many years. In 1954 E.F. Hastings did a study for his master's thesis at LSU concerning the life history of the cottontail and swamp rabbits in LA. Other than this study and a few food habitat studies by LSU, there has not been much research done on this important small game animal in Louisiana.

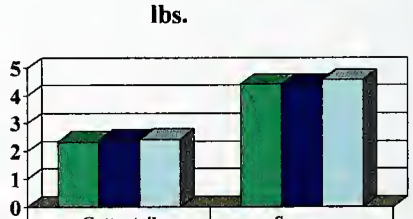
Initially the idea was to simply collect rabbits for stomach worm analysis by the LSU researchers. After the initial collection it was decided that this would be an excellent opportunity to collect some additional data from the rabbits such as live weight, productivity, and age. Upon collection, rabbits were weighed and identified. Productivity was determined by measuring embryos from pregnant females or by identifying lactating females. Age was established from eye lens weight. Rabbits were randomly collected at all habitat sites without regard to species. Most rabbits were collected after dark with aid of a spotlight.

Cottontail rabbits occurred more frequently at the marsh and mixed pine/hardwood sites than the swamp rabbits. At the bottomland hardwood site swamp rabbits were more common than the smaller cottontails. Live weights for male and female swamp rabbits were similar for all habitat sites. Hastings found an average live weight of 4.39 for swamp rabbits which is almost identical to the 4.48 pound average found in this study. Hastings determined an average live weight of 2.54 pounds for cottontail rabbits in his study. Live weights for male and female rabbits in this study were similar and the overall live weight was 2.5 pounds. Female rabbits on the bottomland site weighed less than the

2000 Rabbit Study Species Composition

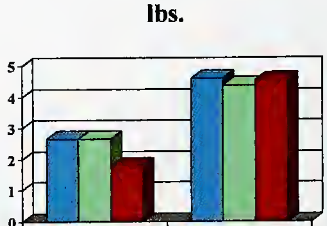


Male Rabbit Weights 2000 Study



	Cottontail	Swamp
■ Marsh	2.34	4.41
■ Pine/Hdwd	2.4	4.4
□ Bl Hdwd	2.44	4.57

Female Rabbit Weights 2000 Study



	Cottontail	Swamp
Marsh	2.65	4.59
Pine/Hdwd	2.66	4.38
Bl Hdwd	1.8	4.55

■ Marsh □ Pine/Hdwd ■ Bl Hdwd

other two locations, however this was a small sample and consisted of very young rabbits collected during June.

In this study, pregnant rabbits were collected in all months of the year except November. Lactating females were collected in November on the marsh and bottomland hardwood habitat sites. The bottomland hardwood site had the highest productivity (average number of fetuses per female). This study found an average of 2.9 fetuses per female on all habitat sites for the swamp rabbit and an average of 3.5 fetuses per female for cottontail rabbits on all habitat sites. In Hasting's study, the average number of fetuses for swamp rabbits was 2.84 and 3.7 for cottontail rabbits. The almost year-round breeding season of the rabbit is one reason rabbits can be hunted quite heavily and still maintain high numbers.

The development of the rabbit stomach worm was not similar to that found in cattle, so using it as a model to investigate cattle nematode parasites may not be feasible. Swamp rabbits had higher levels of stomach parasites than cottontails.

Rabbits often do not receive much attention from wildlife managers because they are so adaptable and seem to take care of themselves. However, in addition to their importance as a game animal, rabbits can serve as an important indicator of the ecological health of our land. If an area contains few rabbits, it is usually because there is a lack of suitable habitat. Lack of rabbit habitat also means habitat for other wildlife is also lacking. This would include nesting/brood rearing habitat for wild turkeys, fawning cover for deer, and year-round habitat for bobwhite quail and numerous grassland/shrub songbirds. So, if you see an abundance of rabbits along a roadside, chances are the adjoining land has a diversity of other wildlife as well.

David Moreland is the Deer Program Manager and Fred Kimmel is the Upland Game Program Manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Andy DeRosa is a research associate with the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine.

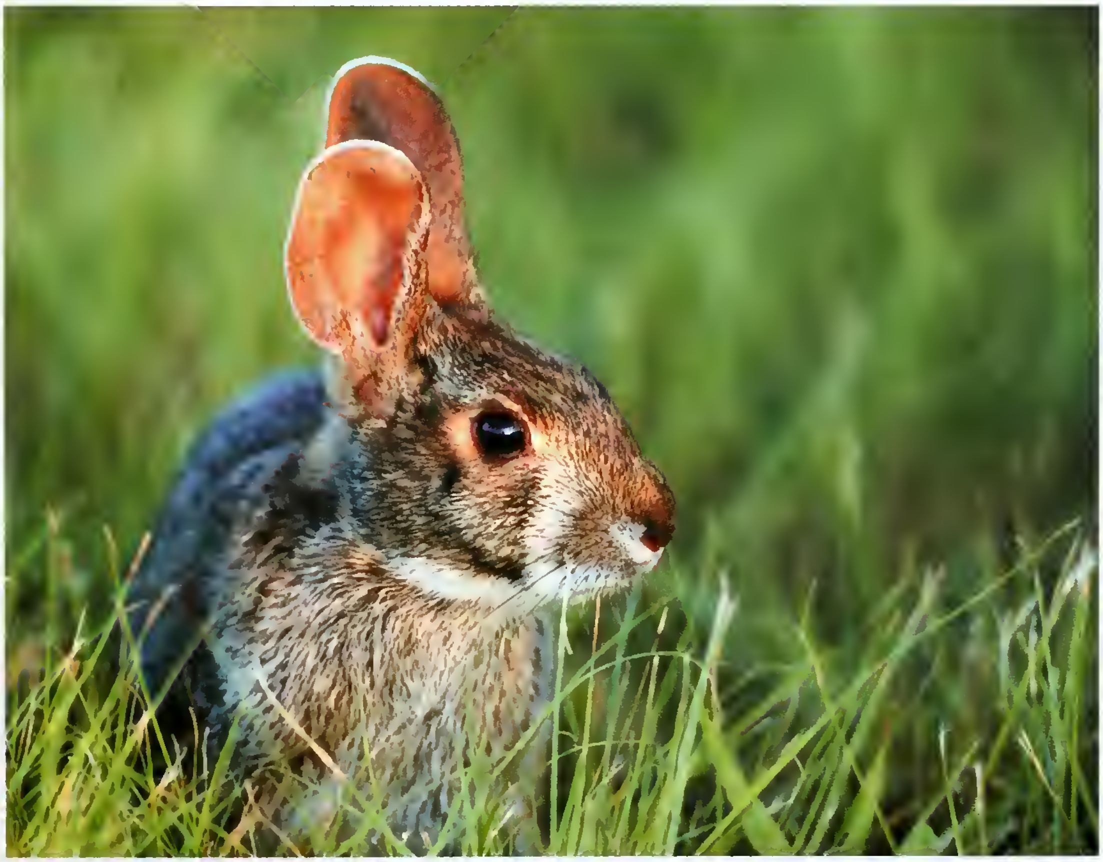


Photo by Brian Miller

The swamp rabbit (at left) resembles the cottontail but is considerably larger and darker in color. The top of the head, the cheeks and the entire back are much browner with the center of the back showing splashes of black.

the Seasoning of a Gun

PART TWO

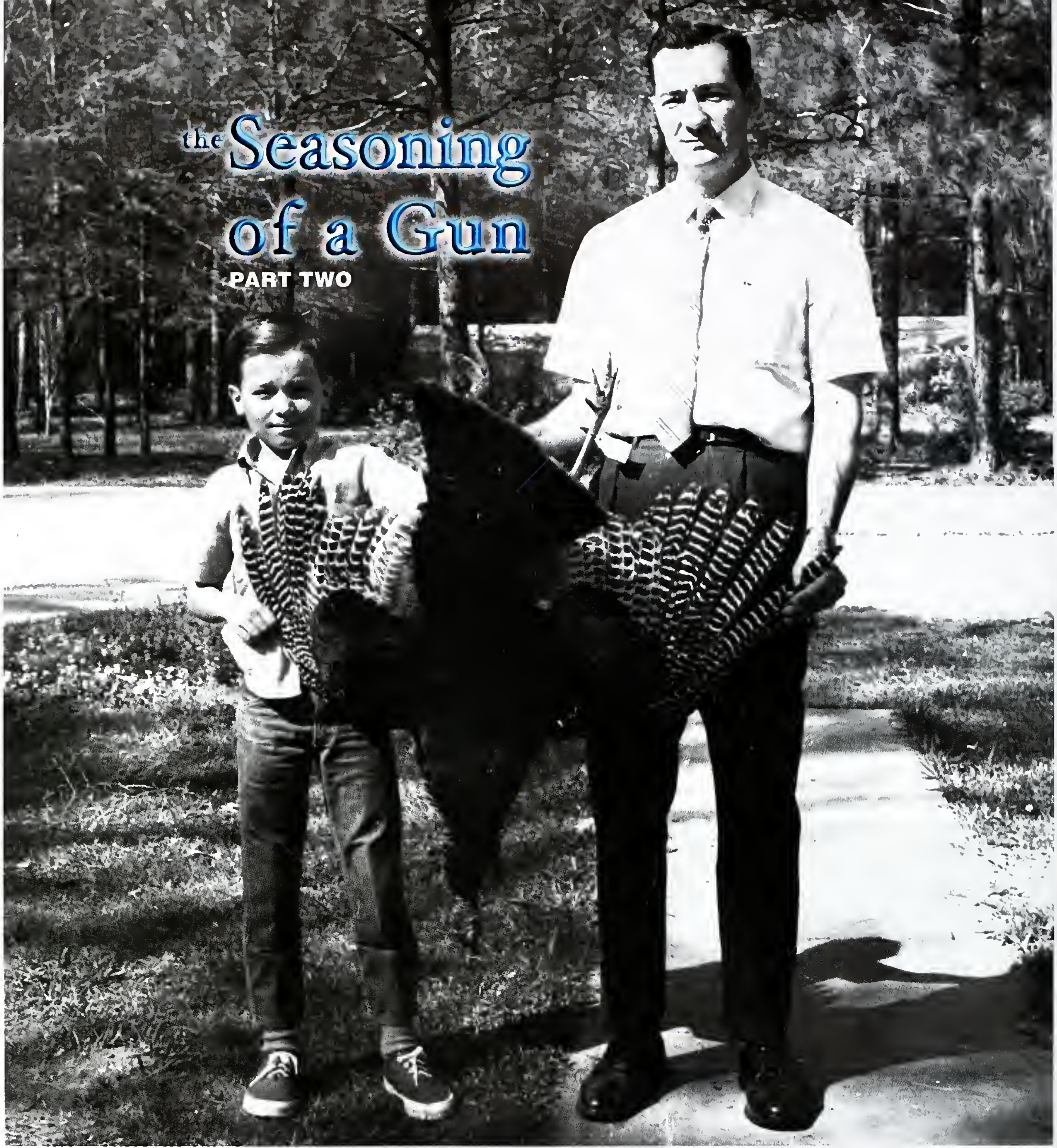


Photo courtesy of Norman James Stafford.

STORY BY NORMAN JAMES STAFFORD III

A hunter's first gun is sometimes one that is passed along by another family member and in some cases is handed down to several generations of hunters. The second part to this story concerns a "Bay State" 20 gauge single barrel shotgun manufactured sometime in the early 1900's. The gun came into our family through a rather ominous manner. The story goes that my great Uncle Felder Stafford, "Uncle Fel" as we called him, gave the shotgun to a tenant worker living on the home place. In those days a gun was just as essential for survival as a mule and plow. It not only provided meat for the table, but it protected farm animals from predators such as opossums, raccoons, and the like. Unfortunately, the tenant worker got into a major altercation with another worker which resulted in a shootout. This duel of sorts, resulted in one man dead and the other severely wounded. It also resulted in the lowly 20 gauge being confiscated as a murder weapon. At the time of this incident, Uncle Fel was an elected parish official. Whether he used his political influence or his well-known charm is unknown, but somehow he managed to obtain his shotgun, and he passed it on to his brother, my grandpa, N.J. "Pompey" Stafford.

Now PaPaw was known for his ability to wing shoot wild bobwhite quail with his double barrel 12 gauge shotgun. He was even know to sell his surplus quail to merchants in Covington, LA for twenty-five cents each, which was big money during the Great Depression. Market hunting, now illegal, was commonly practiced in Louisiana around the turn of the century. These wild game animals along with other north shore goods would be taken by boat to the French Market in New Orleans.

Prior to WWII, PaPaw, who himself was a veteran of WWI, was employed by the US government to train young men at the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp in Mt. Hermon, LA. During this period, his available hunting time was greatly reduced because of work demands and other depression era difficulties. His eldest son, James, my father, came of hunting age during this time and the old 20 gauge was passed along to him. Squirrels learned to fear the sound of the 20 gauge as dad slipped quietly down Gorman Creek behind his house. This extra meat source was a God-send to his family while government instituted rationing was going on during the war.

Just as we are stewards of the land that we now live on and hunt, we are likewise stewards of the gun, enjoying it for a short while and then passing it along to the next generation.

His mother, our MaMaw, would gladly help him clean all of the harvested squirrels. MaMaw did met her match on the day he came home with a thirty-two inch long Bachman fox squirrel (a subspecies of the fox squirrel with a white nose patch, white feet, and white-tipped tail). It was the largest one they had ever seen. They nearly pulled each other's arms off trying to skin the rodent. After cooking on the stove for several hours, the anticipated feast was short-lived when it was quickly discovered that the meat was as tough as jerky. I would later be reminded by MaMaw not to ever bring in to her house a fox squirrel.

The 20 gauge continued to serve dad well through the 1940s. In some years he would harvest in excess of 200 squirrels in a single season. He also learned some valuable lessons about wildlife with it. On one occasion he stuck the barrel through the crack in the chicken coop to kill a opossum that was eating eggs. Unfortunately the "possum" turned out to be a skunk. PaPaw had warned him about these "pole cats". While dad nailed the critter, this shot in the dark also resulted in a direct hit to dad by the skunk's nauseous spray. His mis-identification resulted in him spending his first night outside the home, mainly at the unanimous request of his parents.

My grandparents second son, my Uncle Larry, also grew up using the 20 gauge. When Larry was born PaPaw was in his fifties and MaMaw was in her forties. He was considered an unexpected gift from God and perhaps is one reason for him becoming a Methodist minister. One cool October morning in 1953 young Larry and PaPaw, who was almost sixty, went into the woods for a squirrel hunt. Uncle Larry with the aid of his dad's keen eyesight killed his first squirrel with the gun. To commemorate the occasion, PaPaw carved the name Larry and the date, October 23, 1953, into the bark of the old Beech tree that the squirrel had been in. To this day, some 50 years later, the tree with its' carving are still visible on the bank of Gorman Creek.

The sixties was a time of great cultural changes in this country, but in rural Washington Parish some things stayed the same, such as a young boy with his first gun and an unquenchable desire to hunt. The gun had been passed along again, this time to me. This gift was more valuable to me than any that I had previously received and it was soon put to use. Squirrels, rabbits, quail, ducks, and doves all fell prey to the old 20 gauge. I

Photo by Maslowski Wildlife Productions

Hunters regard the gray squirrel as one of their favorites quarry because its sly wariness and elusiveness.

learned many valuable lessons of woodsmanship as well as some in just plain old common sense. For example, I discovered one shouldn't jump out of a vehicle until it is stopped. At the age of twelve, while riding home from a hunt in Tangipahoa Parish, Dad suggested that I look out the window for turkeys in a freshly burned longleaf pine forest. No sooner had he spoken these words than I spied a big one and I leaped from the vehicle before it was stopped. Luckily Dad had slowed the car down and I wasn't hurt. Somehow during the race toward the turkey I managed to load the gun, cock it, and at a very close range fired at the gobbler. Needless to say my aim was off since I was still running when I fired (as they say on tv, don't try this at home or in the field, it is not a safe hunting technique). I think that both Dad and the turkey got a good laugh from my antics. However, I was in tears as I dejectedly walked back to the car.

The author's grandfather, N.J. Stafford, is shown below.

Photo courtesy of Norman James Stafford.

Another more valuable lesson was learned when I visited my Uncle (Reverend) Larry after an "overly" successful squirrel hunt with the old gun. It was opening day and the squirrel hunting was quite good. Instead of rejoicing with me and my good harvest of squirrels, Uncle Larry proceeded to scold me hunter ethics and being a game hog. He enlightened me to the fact that killing a lot of game does not make someone a good hunter. Greed, he said, is not a characteristic of a skillful hunter. After that meeting I viewed my role as a hunter quite differently.

During the late seventies and eighties the gun was passed along to my brother Bill and then to Larry's son John. Both enjoyed the time spent hunting with their dads and the old 20 gauge. After lying dormant for a few seasons it was time to pass the gun on to the next generation of Staffords. This time my first son David was the recipient. By the age of five, David had killed his first rabbit and duck and was totally consumed with the desire to hunt. Worrying that perhaps he may "burn-out" on hunting I asked former LDWF Administrator Hugh Bateman if I should quit taking him hunting. He laughed and asked me if I had burned out on hunting as a youth. The answer was obvious and I have since quit worrying about the matter. Already at the age of eight David has had a close encounter with a nine point buck and three wild gobblers. His initials, along with his younger brother Brandon's, are carved into the old Beech tree on Gorman Creek.

I fully expect the gun to be passed on next to young Brandon, then to John's son Peyton, and who knows who will enjoy the heritage of the 20 gauge after that. Come to think of it, the old 20 gauge has never really been thought of as being personally owned by any of us. Just as we are stewards of the land that we now live on and hunt, we are likewise stewards of the gun, enjoying it for a short while and then passing it along to the next generation. I guess it is not the gun that is perpetual, but rather the bonds that it has helped create during our lives. Those bonds are the unending relationships established at an early age between fathers and sons.

Norman James Stafford is a wildlife biologist in Region 7 which includes Sandy Hollow and Ben's Creek wildlife management areas.

OFFSHORE BIRDERS

Photo by William E. King

STORY BY WILLIAM E. KING, PH.D.

Looking dreadfully sinister, the great barracuda lay just beneath the surface of the ink-black water. To the west, the blood-red moon sank toward the misty horizon. Brian Gibbons showed no interest in the moon or the fish. His attention was riveted on migrating birds that might have arrived during the night and could be using the oil and gas platform as a way station on their passage across the Gulf of Mexico. It was five a.m. and Brian was beginning his first census of the day on Exxon Mobil's Green Canyon 18A, a platform lying 75 miles off the coast of Louisiana in the gulf.

Brian and nine other professional bird watchers had been gathering bird census data on 10 oil and gas platforms strung across the northern Gulf of Mexico. The ten "birdmen," as they are known offshore, had been performing fieldwork on a project monitoring migration of neo-tropical birds crossing the gulf and trying to determine the role of off-

Photo by Bob Russell

Like all members of the rail family, soras (*Porzana carolina*) are normally marsh dwellers. Though among the noisiest and most common rails in Louisiana marshes, their excellent camouflage keeps them hidden from all but the most observant birders.

shore platforms in migration.

After breakfast, one of the production workers handed Brian an exhausted barn swallow. Brian showed the man the emaciated breast keel and the white spots on the primary wing feathers. The white spots probably indicated a mite infestation. The worker nodded sadly as Brian explained that such a stressed bird probably wouldn't survive migration.

During the 11:00 a.m. platform census, Brian spotted white feathers floating down from high on the drill rig temporarily perched on the northern half of the platform. Something up there was dining on a white bird, perhaps a cattle egret. Later, a peregrine falcon banked sharply around a corner of the platform – probably the pre-noon diner. By nightfall, three peregrines had taken up roosts on the platform after foraging in the vicinity for most of the evening.

Six platform censuses spaced from 5:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. structure a birdman's day – seven days a week. On a large platform such as Green Canyon 18A, Brian requires about an hour to complete a platform census. Birdmen also take a half-hour sea census and a half-hour flight census in the morning and two more flight censuses in the afternoon. In addition to migrating birds, Brian and the other birdmen document sightings of insects and marine megafauna such as whale sharks, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

The northern parula (*Parula americana*) is a member of the warbler family. Breeding grounds for these birds stretch along the eastern portion of North America from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Photo by Bob Russell

Project Director Dr. Bob Russell, of Louisiana State University, developed the project protocol. Funding, funneled through the LSU Coastal Marine Institute, comes from the Environmental Studies Program of the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS). MMS is the federal bureau responsible for managing mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf. Six oil companies, BP, ExxonMobil, Newfield Exploration, Phillips, Shell, and Texaco, cooperate by providing room, board, and transportation for the birdmen while they are offshore.

LSU's involvement in this project is especially appropriate. Scientific recognition of trans-gulf bird migration arose largely through the writings of George Lowery, the first curator of birds at the LSU Museum of Natural Science. In addition, the west central Louisiana coast provides the center of northward trans-gulf bird migration in the spring. The idea that MMS should fund a platform-based bird migration research study sprang from the fertile mind of Villere Reggio, former outdoor recreation planner at the MMS Gulf of Mexico Regional Office in New Orleans.

A blue marlin attack on the fish life massed about the platform provides one of the most exciting events in a birdman's day. The structure of a large platform in the relatively featureless Gulf of Mexico shelf acts as a magnet for marine life. Around Green Canyon 18A, yellowtail (rainbow runners) are the most common medium-sized predators, augmented by a scattering of great barracuda. The first sign of a marlin's approach is the mass of yellowtails streaking for the safety of the platform's giant pipes. The marlin itself appears in a flash, seemingly out of nowhere. Its bill slashes through the horde of fish as it contorts its body, seeming to fold itself in half, to stun as many prey as possible. During the attack the marlin's pectoral fins and lower body shine brilliant blue. After the slashing is over, the blue fades as the giant fish leisurely picks up the stunned yellowtails. The stripes on the marlin's sides show clearly as the great fish slowly undulates away, heads and tails protruding from its mouth.

On BP's Ewing Bank 826 platform, birdman Jon King explains more about the project and its objectives: About a billion birds make the twice-yearly trek across the gulf. Populations of many of the neo-tropical migrants have dropped precipitously of late;

research into their migration patterns is especially important in developing conservation strategies. In spring, the majority of migrant species appear to gather on the northern coast of Yucatan where they await appropriate winds. When the strong southerly winds that characterize the spring season arrive, many of the birds launch from land about sundown and fly north overnight to hit the coast of Louisiana and adjacent states in the morning. Especially strong winds sometimes carry the birds as far as Arkansas and Oklahoma before they land.

On the other hand, an abrupt change in the weather, such as a strong front from the north, can stall the birds over water and force them to seek refuge. Under these circumstances, offshore platforms can be lifesavers for exhausted birds. If the weather is especially severe, thousands of birds may circle the platforms prior to landing on protected decks. Jon King witnessed such an event in April 1998. "My pre-dawn census total of live birds on the platform was a conservative 2145. The South Sub-cellar deck was carpeted in warblers, and the underside of the Cellar Deck was packed. It took a lot of patience to walk around without stepping on birds."

Photo by Bob Russell

At left: Thanks to captive breeding programs and the reduction of pesticide usage, the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is no longer an uncommon site. Depending on the time of year, this big raptor can now be found along almost the entire North American coastline, throughout Alaska, Northern Canada and in the mountainous regions of the Western U.S.

John Arvin, another witness, exults, "This experience far exceeds any migration spectacle that I have witnessed in 40 years of gulf coastal bird study and probably exceeds all previous experiences combined. I suspect that very few people on this planet have seen what I have seen in the last 12 hours. It is a spellbinding feeling I will carry to my grave."

As dramatic as circulation events and mass landings may be in the spring, the platforms probably play a more important rescue role in the fall. Then, birds bound for winter quarters on the Gulf Coast ride autumn winds from the north. If the winds prove stronger than the birds anticipate, thousands of them may be blown out over the Gulf. Unable to reach land against the strong northerlies, many of the birds take refuge on offshore platforms. There they forage on the "aerial plankton," insects blown out over water with them. Once the winds subside, most of the stranded birds fly north to land.

Photo by Bob Russell

Blackpoll warblers (*Dendroica striata*) are little birds who travel a long way. Each year after breeding in Alaska, Canada and New England, these birds make their way to South America for the winter.

Jon King explains that one of the most intriguing questions the project is trying to answer is whether the "artificial archipelago" formed by the 4000-odd platforms in the Gulf of Mexico is actually influencing the migration habits and ranges of trans-gulf migrants. White-winged doves are a case in point. In the spring of 1998, the doves were frequent visitors to several of the birdman-occupied platforms. That summer, they were sighted on land in larger numbers farther east than previous records indicated. Were the birds extending their range by hopping from platform to platform from Mexico and Texas into Louisiana and beyond?

Back in Baton Rouge, Bob Russell sifts project data to uncover evidence to unvravel the white-winged dove mystery and many others. His analysis compares census data from the platforms with radar data from the National Weather Service. He is also compiling results from his insect sampling program on the platforms and trying to put all the results into publishable form. Patterns of behavior Russell can tease from the complex tapestry of information will bolster the scientific understanding of migration and teach us more about the natural history of Louisiana's birds and insects.

William E. King, Ph.D., has 30 years experience in the environmental field and has authored scores of technical papers and publications. He has been published in the Bird Watchers Digest and People, Land and Water.

REFORESTATION:

a Process, Not an Event

ARTICLE BY
BUDDY DUPUY

Fifteen years ago, reforestation efforts in the southeast were primarily limited to the replacement of trees harvested for forest products. Sound timber management dictates that land managers provide for the renewal of harvested forests, either through natural or artificial regeneration. This was especially true for lands that had little potential for row-crop agriculture but could produce a new crop of trees on a regular and relatively short rotation period.

The majority of Louisiana's "piney woods" are managed primarily for timber production and loblolly pine is by far the single most planted species on such lands. Establishing a loblolly pine plantation on a site that only months before was growing mature loblolly pines, while never a sure thing, is a relatively "cook book" undertaking. Weather, primarily dry conditions during the first 10 months post planting, probably causes most of the failed planting.

While reforestation on pine sites hasn't diminished in recent years, a relatively new and vastly different type of reforestation is in full swing today, the restoration of mixed species bottomland hardwood forests. Hardwood plantings are similar to pine plantations in some respects but differ in primary use of product, funding sources, survival factors and the amount of planning needed to achieve success.

The late 1980s marked the beginning of a major reforestation effort still in progress in the Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Valley (LMAV). Federal and state agencies, conservation organizations and private landowners have completed approximately 125,000 acres of the more than one-half million acres planned for reforestation. Most of this acreage has been planted under the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the primary purpose being to return marginal croplands to forested wildlife habitat.

The areas targeted for reforestation had been bottomland hardwood forests containing several to many tree species prior to conversion for row-crops. Most of these forests had been cleared at least 10 years earlier—some had been farmed for decades. Re-establishing forested conditions similar to those present before conversion can be very challenging. Drainage alterations, whether major levee systems used for flood control or minor field drains associated with the last crop, often significantly change the hydrology of the site. Even if it is known what types of trees were previously on the area, there's no guarantee they will adapt to current conditions. Young plantations, which appear to be successful based on the number of living trees, may not be particularly healthy and vigorous after years of growing under some environmental stress. Unfortunately, we have few opportunities to study older plantations. Prior to the 1980s there was very little hardwood planting done. Though there are some hardwood plantations that date back to the late 1960s, most are small, scattered, experimental plantings of a relatively few species.

Natural resource managers involved in bottomland hardwood reforestation use a varied information and experience in their endeavors. Much research has been initiated by several universities and state and federal agencies. Studies of planting techniques have been completed but tree growth, mast production, inter- and intra-specific competition, and general stand dynamics studies are for the most part in their infancy. However, the following decisions have to be made now: which specific fields will be planted; how many species; which species and in what ratio; what planting technique; what type of site preparation; what planting density (number of seed or seedlings per acre). Each of these questions may depend on several factors. For some resource managers, agency policy greatly influences the answers.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has been on the cutting edge of bottomland hardwood reforestation in the southeast since it began in earnest. In 1968 LDWF began its first significant reforestation project. Approximately 600 acres of agriculture fields on Red River Wildlife Management Area in Concordia Parish were planted with six hardwood species. This was a new undertaking and department personnel were faced with some unknowns and limited seedling availability. The job took four planting seasons to complete. In their first restoration project, managers decided that hard mast producing species would be planted because of their wildlife value. Four red oaks, white oak, and sweet pecan were chosen under the assumption that other tree species would eventually become established naturally. Today, this "plantation" is a relatively mature forest and one of the few places to study the development and function of a 30-year-old planted hardwood forest. Several studies are in progress on this plantation by some of the leading hardwood researchers in the southeast.

Through the 1970s, many more small planting jobs were used to reforest portions of several WMAs across the state. Miscellaneous oak species and sweet pecan continued to be the primary species planted. With each job experience was gained, but the real learning took place between 1985 and 1995 when a 4000 acre corridor was reforested, connecting Russell Sage WMA to the wooded portion of Ouachita WMA. Silviculturists from the USDA Forest Service, Center for Bottomland Hardwood Research, were asked for suggestions. Managers used several planting techniques and a greater variety of trees, due to the numerous variables facing them. This 4000 acre tract had many different site conditions associated with the many soil types in the area. From frequently flooded, heavy clay soils to droughty, infertile, shallow soils with a hardpan, this project faced many of the adverse conditions often found on bottomland hardwood sites. One unexpected setback was the 50-year flood of 1991 which wiped out many of the trees planted "off site." Despite the fact that some of these trees were nearly 10 feet tall, a few species could not withstand a growing season flood. Fortunately, most of the species planted were suited to the site and mortality was limited to a few fields.

Throughout this 10 year project much was learned about large scale, operational reforestation on bottomland hardwood sites. Seedlings were planted by hand and by machines; acorns and pecans were direct seeded with manual drop and automated drop machines, under-tilled and non-tilled field conditions; seeds were broadcast on disced fields; several tree species were planted on a variety of soil types. Most of the tree seed used to direct—seed or custom—grow seedlings were collected by LDWF personnel. Even things as basic as seed collection and long-term cold storage techniques had to be experimented with as it took tons of seed collected from sporadic, irregular seed crops to complete the job.

About midway through the Ouachita WMA reforestation project, the surge in bottomland hardwood forest restoration began across the LMAV. Through field trips to Ouachita WMA and information sharing meetings, many folks soon to be involved in reforestation themselves, were able to learn from the experiences LDWF encountered.

Other agencies and a few forest industries had also done some experimental hardwood planting before the surge. LDWF took every opportunity to learn from their efforts as well. Meeting with other reforestation practitioners, carefully planning and evaluating each of it's own planting jobs has helped LDWF develop a systematic approach now in use in restoration efforts.

In it's most simplified form, a typical chain -of-events (assuming the particular field has been selected and seedlings will be hand planted) may go as follows: evaluate the site to determine which species to plant; order the appropriate number of seedlings from a commercial, bare-root seedling nursery in the summer; have the site bushhogged in the fall (if needed); arrange to have the planting done between December and March; visit the site after at least one growing season and evaluate the survival rate. Of course, in reality it is not that simple, many factors affect each step.

Selecting the fields to be planted begins with land use planning. After a recent land acquisition, administrators and biologists determine the management focus for the new tract. Agriculture fields may be kept open for waterfowl use, reforested, or remain in agriculture for a while. Once a portion of the tract has been designated for reforestation, the planting of individual fields is prioritized. Those areas requiring tree species currently in short supply may be left alone for a year or so. Conversely, if a field is being encroached by undesirable woody shrubs, it may be planted first, as delaying a few years could increase the cost of site preparation.

Selecting the correct species to plant is crucial for success. There are many hardwoods to choose from, each with different adaptations. The flood regime and soil types dictate which species can be grown on a site. A species with little or no flood tolerance will not survive on a flood prone area. Even if drainage "improvements" now protect the area, the soils haven't changed and growth and long-term health can be significantly affected. Generally several types of trees could be planted successfully on a given field in which case seedling availability influences which are included. Another consideration is the current or anticipated natural invasion of adjacent trees. Under the right conditions, some trees such as ash and elm will encroach naturally if a nearby seed source exists. However, they can't always be relied upon to make it to the middle of larger fields.

LDWF file photos

Department personnel are shown hand planting hardwood seedlings on Boeuf Wildlife Management Area.

In some cases machine planting is more effective.

Choosing a planting technique can be a matter of preference or practicality. Direct seeding is the cheapest method but very tricky if numerous species are being planted. Acorns and pecans can be sown relatively easily, but miscellaneous small-seeded trees are difficult to establish consistently. If seedlings are chosen, either hand or machine planting can be used. Good planting technique is essential with either method. Machines generally do a better job on larger seedlings and can be used to plant through tall weeds if necessary. Hand planting is more common and has its own advantages but each has its place.

Procuring the right kind of seedlings is best accomplished with advance planning. Seed crops are not consistent and shortages in preferred species means first come, first served when it is time to buy trees. LDWF has most of its seedlings custom grown from it's own seed supply. This helps ensure the correct species are available for the upcoming planting season. Tree seed must be collected a minimum of one year in advance. Preliminary plans are made in the fall so the number and species of seedlings that will be needed 14 months later can be predicted. The appropriate amount of seed needed to grow those trees are delivered to a nursery in March. The seedlings are grown one summer then "lifted" in the winter for planting. High humidity coolers are used to store seed up to several years. Good seed crops don't happen every year so collection efforts are increased in bumper years. In recent years, most of the necessary seed has been purchased but department personnel still do some of the collecting. Long-term planning (two to five years) helps focus procurement efforts on species needed for the fields to be planted in the future.

The planting labor source is often determined by which of the several funding sources used in LDWF reforestation program is being used for the particular job. Another consideration is the planting method either required or preferred for a job. Machine planting, which can be done more easily through tall weeds, may be chosen for fields that have some trees but need more. Supplemental planting (adding more trees) and enrichment planting (adding a new species) can be done without the need to bushhog a field. If machine planting is chosen then department personnel handle the job. If hand planting is selected and the funding source allows, contractors will do the job.

Site preparation can be an important first step. Subsoiling, while seldom called for, can improve tree growth on sites with a hardpan. Drainage altering dirt work is sometimes needed to meet management objectives. It should be done or anticipated before planting, so it's effect on species selection can be considered. Bushhogging is the most common site preparation method used and is essential for hand planting fields that have grown up in weeds. The type of natural vegetation present gives clues as to which tree species to plant, but it must be removed so planters can maintain the proper spacing between trees. Bushhogging also allows subtle elevation changes to be seen and flagged out so the appropriate species can be planted in each portion of the field.

Scheduling of planting dates can influence success. Areas prone to late winter flooding are planted first, before access problems arise. If a busy planting season is anticipated, the best sites are often put last on the list. Better seedling survival is expected on loamy soils than on clay if planting must be extended to the end of the planting season.

Establishing survival plots aides in evaluating the successfulness of a planting job. The number of surviving seedlings after at least one growing season is the preliminary measure of success. Soon after a field is planted, a sample of trees is marked with wire-stake flags. The sample includes all species planted and covers all distinct elevations and soils found in the field. The most crucial period for successful establishment of the newly planted trees is their first year. By identifying the trees flagged in the survival plots during establishment, survival rates for each species can be compared. The information is used not only to plan future reforestation jobs, but to determine if re-planting or supplemental planting is needed.

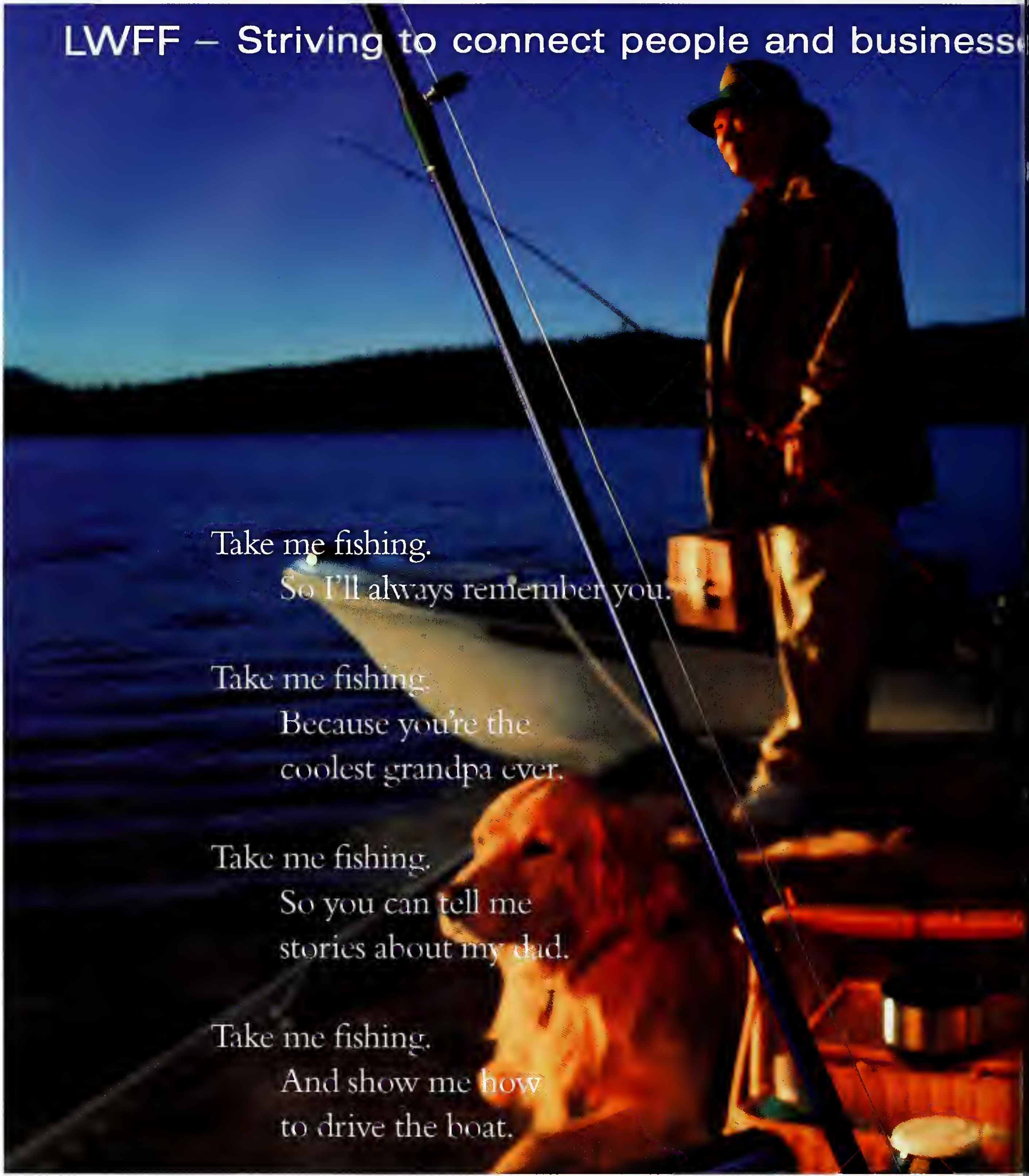
Though actual tree planting only takes place in the dormant season, the process of reforestation never really ends. Seed must be collected; seedlings grown; contacts made; sites evaluated; fields bushhogged; equipment repaired; trees planted; and more seed collected; and more seedlings grown...

Since 1968 LDWF has reforested over 14,000 acres of agricultural fields purchased through the department's land acquisition program. These areas are generally adjacent to existing WMAs and add to the land base available for public use. The bulk of the acreage was planted during the last decade with 500-2000 acres (200,000 to 700,000 seedlings) being planted annually since the early 1990s. As many as 10 WMAs may receive some degree of reforestation each year, and as many as 30 species are used to restore the variety of sites found in the state-wide WMA system. The short-term outlook for LDWF is similar to the past few years in terms of acres designated for reforestation. However, even as experience builds from annual operational planting, research continues to provide more answers and stimulate new ideas.

The restoration of bottomland hardwood forests is extremely challenging, but with the many players now involved, successful reforestation efforts are almost commonplace. Across the LMAV, coordinated efforts by many entities have resulted in a significant amount of restored bottomland hardwood forests, providing untold recreational opportunities and enhanced wildlife habitat. The tree planting may or may not end when current acreage goals are met, but the enjoyment and long term management of these forests will continue for decades—and so a new process begins.

Buddy Dupuy is a forestry parish supervisor in LDWF Region 3, Alexandria.

LWFF – Striving to connect people and business



Take me fishing.
So I'll always remember you.

Take me fishing.
Because you're the
coolest grandpa ever.

Take me fishing.
So you can tell me
stories about my dad.

Take me fishing.
And show me how
to drive the boat.

Take me fishing.
So I'll always remember you.

with Louisiana's natural resources.

rks wonders

BOATING, AND

VIRONMENT

Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation
Room 439
P. O. Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898
(225) 763-2700

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation

When a person reads "LDWF" they know it refers to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. However, when someone reads "LWFF" they may assume it is a misprint. It is not. LWFF stands for the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, an entity designed and created to support and enhance LDWF.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation (LWFF) was created six years ago with a mission to promote LDWF, and to further encourage public conservation and enjoyment of Louisiana's natural resources. Its creation in December 1995 was the realization of a vision by Joe Herring, former Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Herring envisioned a foundation that would promote the welfare of LDWF, often saying that in government there was more to accomplish than governmental resources could cover. The proposed Foundation would support Department programs with additional resources developed through its own facilities.

The concept of a Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation was put to the test when Herring (then LDWF Secretary) and a small group of sportsmen and conservationists met to discuss and develop a means for individuals and corporations to partner with LDWF. Don Puckett, LDWF general counsel, drafted Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, and after a few revisions, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation was born. On December 14, 1995 the Articles of Incorporation were signed by six incorporators: John Campbell Jr., a Baton Rouge attorney, Glynn Carver, a Many businessman (then a Wildlife and Fisheries Commission member), Marc Dupuy Jr., a Marksville attorney, Jim Hall, a Ruston banker, John Jackson III, a Metairie attorney and Cliff Penick, a Slidell contractor.

The Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation is a nonprofit public charitable foundation tax exempt under Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and so recognized by the Internal Revenue Service. Its goals are to aid the Department in habitat conservation, environmental education and training, natural resource research and management, regulation enforcement and financial assistance to LDWF programs. These goals are more often accomplished by aiding the Department with monetary donations from individuals and corporations.

Donations to LDWF from conservation groups and interested individuals are often encountered by Department staff. Sometimes the contribution is earmarked for specific uses and other times it's a general contribution to be used where most needed. In either case, once the contribution is identified and approved by both LDWF and LWFF, it is accepted through the Foundation.

Since its creation, the Foundation has aided the Department with financial aid to several programs. A few of those programs include youth hunter education, wood duck conservation projects, Wildlife Management Area improvements, marine and fresh water fisheries research, Louisiana Black Bear restoration, National Hunting and Fishing Day, teacher workshops and the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2000 Conference.

In September 2000, the Foundation launched its most recent and most valuable project to date—the introduction of Florida strain largemouth bass into the Red River. In the interest of developing the Red River, the Foundation and the Red River Waterway Commission, with the technical assistance of the Department, organized the first introduction of Florida bass into the Red River. The projectgoal was to improve the river's bass fishery resource and the genetic trait of the largemouth bass population.

The first phase took place on September 16, 2000, with approximately 8,000 pure Florida strain bass fingerlings released into the river. The main thrust of the project followed on June 23, 2001 with the release of approximately 386,000 Florida largemouth bass fingerlings in five pools from Shreveport to Marksville. Just recently on September 27, 2001, an additional 25,000 Florida largemouth bass were released again into the Red River. This project was a turning point in the history of the Foundation showcasing its ability to aid and assist the Department.

The Red River fish stocking project was possible through designated financial contributions to the Foundation, the primary mechanism used for assisting the Department. In this project a total of $50,000 was donated by Wal Mart - FLW Tour through Fish America Foundation of Alexandria, Virginia, the Red River Waterway Commission, Operation Bass, Wildlife Forever, American Sport Fishing Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Sport Fishing Restoration Program. With the financial backing in place the Red River stocking project began.

Although the largest part of the fish stocking project has passed, the project is not finished. It will continue through contributions from individuals and corporations already designated for this purpose. In addition to the stocking project, LWFF has future plans for additional LDWF programs that involve wetland protection, Wildlife Management Area and Refuge programs, migratory songbird conservation, reforestation, conservation education and endangered species conservation.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation receives no funding from the State of Louisiana or the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and depends entirely upon contributions from individual and corporate donors. Encouraging cooperation and support for LDWF programs is the major focus of the Foundation, striving to connect people and businesses with Louisiana's natural resources. To learn more about the Foundation and how to make tax deductive contributions, write to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, Room 439, P. O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898 or call (225) 763-2700.

Aging Whitetail Deer

STORY BY
DAVID MORELAND

In 1949 C.W. Severinghaus presented the results of a Pittman-Robertson project in the Journal of Wildlife management (vol.13 no.2). This report entitled "Tooth Development in White-Tailed Deer," provided deer biologists with a tool for aging and grouping deer into various age classes. Because the knowledge of age and growth is a key component of any wildlife program, Severinghaus' work opened the door for modern deer management.

Most hunters will generally tell you that they would like to harvest a deer worthy of hanging on the wall. For this to happen, the age factor of a buck must be considered. A good trophy buck generally is going to be one that is 3 1/2 years old or older. Bucks that are 1 1/2 and 2 1/2 years old are just too young to have big racks and generally are not worthy of mounting.

The 2000/01 deer season was a record book season for Louisiana. There were more than 50 bucks harvested that qualified for listing in state and national records. One reason for this increase in quality bucks is that many clubs are practicing quality deer management and are passing up some of the younger bucks and letting them live a year or two longer.

Many biologists believe that aging deer beyond the 2 1/2 year age class is a waste of time because of variations in wear due to different soil types and/ or differences in food eaten by deer. I personally believe that if one remains consistent with the key criteria for each age class deer can be placed into the various age groups based upon tooth wear. Most individuals should at least be able to separate deer into fawn, yearling and adult age groups. This is sufficient information for determining the growth rate for deer in a particular herd and can be used for management purposes. Certainly there will be jawbones that show unusual or abnormal wear and in these situations its best to leave them in the adult or 2 1/2 age class.

It is necessary to learn some general tooth anatomy in order to age whitetails. The enamel of a tooth is the hard calcareous substance covering the exposed portion of the tooth. As the enamel wears away it exposes the dentine, which is the part beneath the enamel containing the pulp chamber and root canals. An individual tooth consists of two or three parts known as cusps. Each cusp is comprised of two crests. The taller, inside, tongue-like crest is referred to as the lingual crest. Opposite this crest and occurring on the cheek side of the cusp is the smaller buccal crest. The infundibulum is the funnel-shaped passage between these two crests.

Only the teeth in the lower jaw are used in the aging process. The front teeth are referred to as incisors, and the remaining teeth are called premolars and molars. Deer do not have front teeth or incisors in the upper jaw. The molar teeth are multicuspids and are the main teeth to examine when aging deer. A cusp is a projection on the chewing (occlusal) surface of a tooth. The first premolars that a deer develops are deciduous (temporary). These temporary premolars are shed and replaced with permanent premolars, usually between 17 and 20 months of age.

The first step in the aging process is to remove a lower jawbone from the deer or open its mouth wide enough so that all molars are visible. A device known as a jaw-

Most hunters will tell you they would like to harvest a deer worthy of hanging on the wall. One way that becomes possible is through proper management of deer herds , in which younger bucks are allowed to live a year or two longer and grow larger racks.

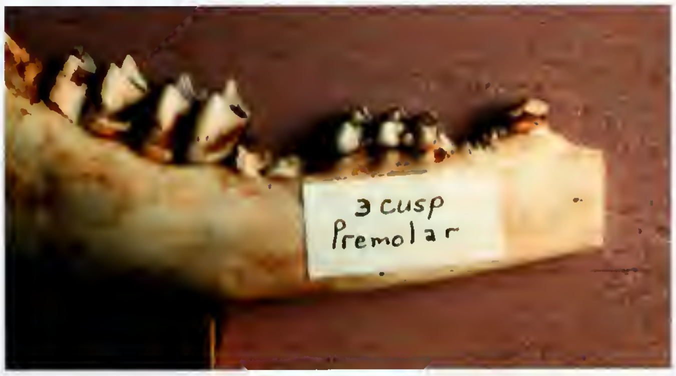


Figure 1A

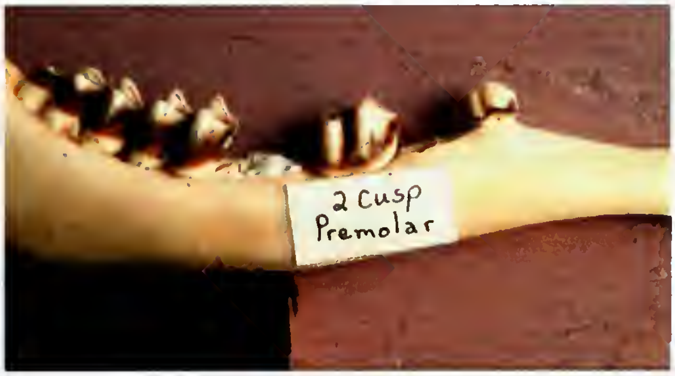


Figure 1B

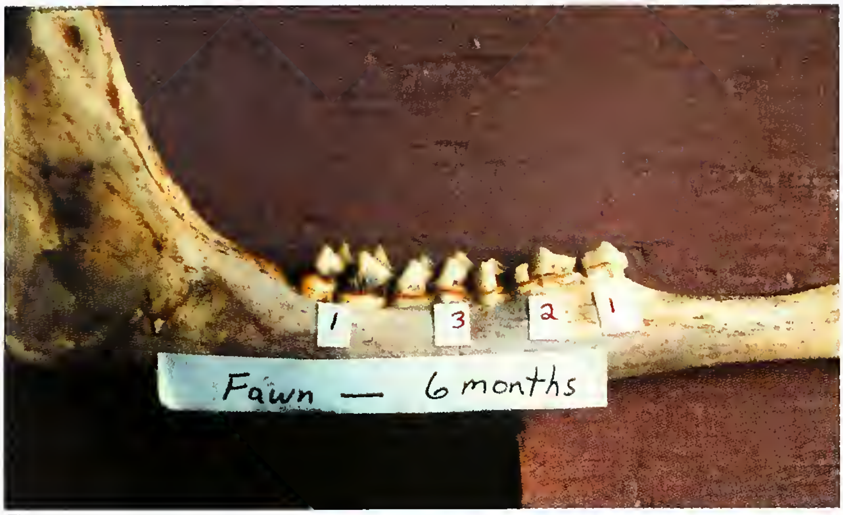


Figure 2

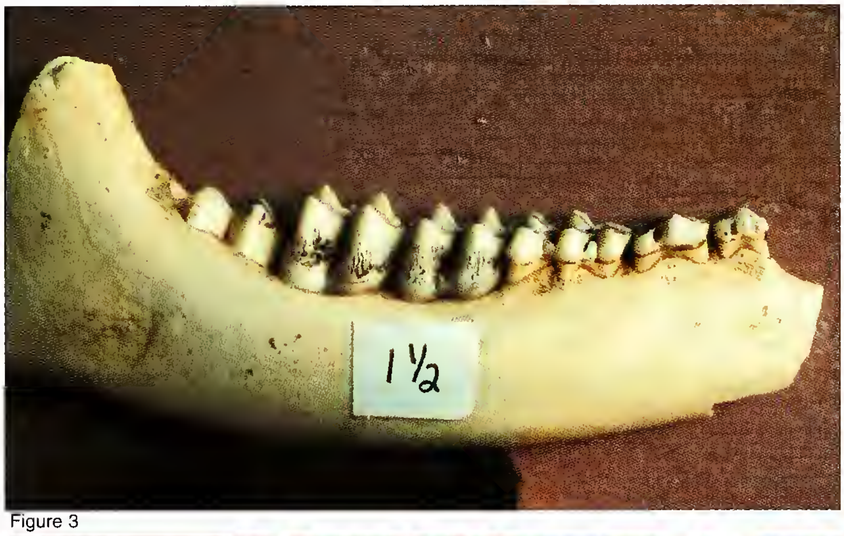


Figure 3

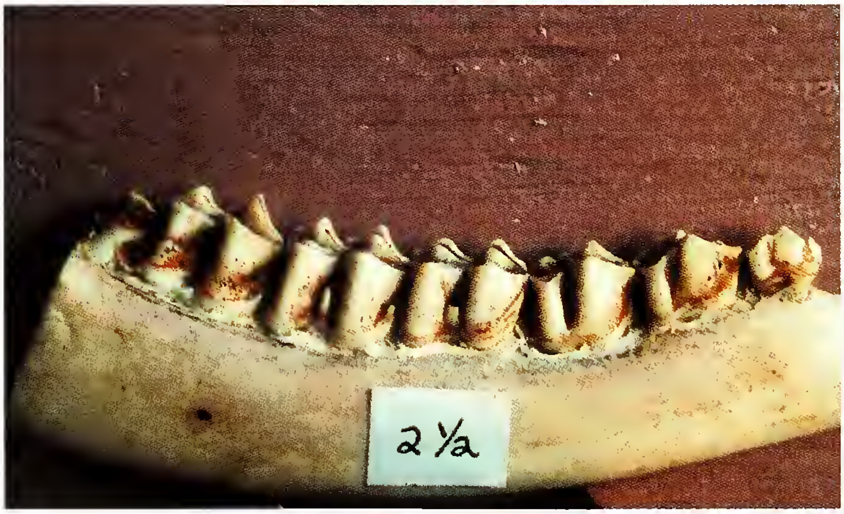


Figure 4

The above figures represent the three basic age classes of deer, fawns (figure 2), yearlings (figure 3) and adults (figure 4). Biologists use this age information to evaluate the physical condition of a deer herd. Without this age information, it is impossible to determine the age and growth for a particular herd.

bone extractor is a handy tool to aid in this process. Adult bucks that are to be mounted can be aged by opening their mouth and viewing with a flashlight. These lower jawbones can be removed without damaging the cape, but it is probably best to let the taxidermist remove it.

The first tooth to examine is the third premolar. The structure of this tooth will determine if the deer is 1 1/2 years old or younger, or if it is 2 1/2 years or older. If the third premolar had three cusps (figure 1A), the deer is 1 1/2 years or younger. The second premolar and first molar have been removed in figure 1A for easier viewing of the third premolar.

If the third premolar has two cusps (Figure 1B) the deer is 2 1/2 years or older except in situations where the third premolar is not fully erupted (at full height above the gum line and in line with the molars). In this case the deer should be placed in the 1 1/2 year age class.

The following information breaks down the age classes into three categories:

I. Fawns – (Figure 2) 6 month old age class

1.) Premolars – Three temporary premolars: third premolar has three cusps.

2.)Molars – Not more than one fully erupted molar. If only one or two points of the second molar are visible and beginning to erupt, the deer should remain in this age class.

3.) Note general size of lower jawbone.

II. Yearlings – (Figure 3) 1 1/2 year old age class.

1.) Premolars: a) three temporary premolars; third premolar has three cusps. b. Premolars in the process of being shed, or three permanent premolars that are not fully erupted (at full height above gum line).

2.) Molars – Two or three fully erupted molars. The third molar may be in various stages of eruption.

III.Adults – (Figure 4) 2 1/2 years or older age class

1.) Premolars - three permanent fully erupted molars. The third molar may be in various stages of eruption.

2.) Molars – three molars fully erupted.

This article was reprinted from the March/April 1994 *Louisiana Conservationist Magazine.*

OUTLOOK 'GOOD' FOR 2001-02 DEER HUNTING SEASON

Due to adequate rainfall, quality browse conditions existed for deer populations across the state this year during the late summer and early fall, and the result is a good forecast for the 2001-02 deer hunting season, according to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologists.

"Rainfall hurt farmers across the state, but it was good for the native habitat following several years of summer drought," noted David Moreland, LDWF deer study leader. "Deer herd health checks conducted by LDWF indicated heavy consumption of muscadine and French mulberry fruit in piney woods habitat areas. Rainfall also helped a developing mast (acorn) crop, which appears to be good in some areas of the state. Hunters doing some October squirrel hunting have probably already located these feed trees."

In addition, rainfall benefited hunting clubs and landowners who maintain food plots, Moreland said. Hunters should keep in mind, however, that when the mast crop is good in a particular area of the woods, deer use of food plots may be light.

"According to the 2000-01 Game Harvest Survey results tallied by LDWF, the deer harvest was slightly down from the 1999-2000 season, despite a good, cold winter," Moreland said. "Some hunters did admit that it was just too cold to be in a deer stand. Last year's good duck hunting may have moved some deer hunters from the woods to the lakes and marshes, which may have had an impact on the total deer harvest."

"Overall we anticipate a good deer season for 2001-02. Based on research work and fawn sightings during October, productivity appears high. Ninety percent of the adult does in LDWF's recently completed Area 6 breeding study were pregnant and the does averaged 1.6 fetuses, which is considered good productivity."

"Herd health dictates deer quality and productivity," explained Moreland. "Herds that are effectively managed through proper either-sex harvest and habitat management work are producing quality deer. In the Area 6 study, healthy does that weighed 130 pounds or more averaged 1.8 fetuses per doe. Areas that are also selectively harvesting antlered buck populations are allowing bucks to grow older, which generally equates to larger antlers. Last year's trophy buck harvest was up from previous seasons. If excellent hunting weather occurs this season, this good harvest is expected to continue."

According to Moreland, over 50 deer officially scored from the 2000 season will qualify for listing in the Louisiana Recognition Program, 1998-2000. Shannon Deville harvested a buck in St. Landry Parish that scored 179-2/8 and qualifies for listing in the Boone and Crockett record book and ranks ninth on the state list. Bryan LaPrairie took a buck with bow and arrow on the Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge that scored 149.

"LDWF's Harvest Survey indicates that an eight point with a 16-inch inside spread is considered a trophy deer by Louisiana hunters and a six-point buck is a quality deer," Moreland said. "Most Louisiana habitat can produce bucks with six points. However, on lower quality sites, an adult buck with a 13-inch inside spread is the state average, so all sites cannot produce real trophies without supplemental habitat work."

Most hunting clubs and landowners should design their deer program objectives with habitat in mind, Moreland said. Habitat dominated by pine timber will not regularly produce quality bucks such as those produced by a predominantly hardwood site. Adult piney wood bucks average 155 pounds, whereas bottomland hardwood bucks average 180 pounds.

LDWF hunting license sales and the muzzleloader harvest indicate that interest in the special muzzleloader seasons continues to grow. Last season, the number of deer harvested by black powder hunters slightly exceeded the number taken with bow and arrow--for the first time.

Recent change in laws and regulations will allow muzzleloader hunters to use magnified scopes on their rifles. The use of leashed trailing dogs to aid in retrieving wounded or dead deer that hunters could not find will also be permitted, which will particularly benefit bowhunters on private lands. However, trailing dogs are not allowed on wildlife management areas, Moreland noted.

"It's important for deer hunters to take time to review all hunting regulations and season dates," cautioned Moreland. "Hunters should be concerned not only for the safety of other hunters but for their own safety. Hunter orange regulations should be carefully followed and all equipment should be checked before going to the woods."

Fox Squirrel

Squirrel hunting is Louisiana's most popular small game hunting sport. In 2001, 107,000 hunters harvested 1.6 million squirrels.

Louisiana has two species of squirrels—fox and grey. With three geographic races of fox squirrels and two grey, many biologists believe that Louisiana probably has more different kinds of squirrels than any other state.

The three races of fox squirrels in Louisiana are: *Sciurus niger bachmani* (Bachman's fox squirrel); *Scuirus niger subauratus* (delta fox squirrel); and *Sciurus niger ludovicianus* (big-headed fox squirrel).

A large, rust-colored squirrel with white covering the nose, ears, toes and tip of the tail, the Bachman's fox squirrel inhabits the east side of the Mississippi River in the southeast Louisiana terrace lands. This race is rarely found in the black phase.

The delta fox squirrel is a medium sized, reddish squirrel that is bigger than the grey squirrel but smaller than either Bachman's or the big-headed fox squirrel. This race occurs along the Mississippi, Tensas, Ouachita, Atchafalaya and Red river bottoms. The delta fox, unlike its two cousins, is not found in the piney woods but strictly inhabits a bottomland hardwood type of habitat. This race may occur in both the red and black phases.

The big-headed fox squirrel is the largest of all Louisiana's squirrels. It is greyish above, strongly mixed with black, buff and pinkish cinnamon below. The black phase also occurs in this race. It is not uncommon for this race to weigh over two pounds.

Fox squirrels usually have two litters of three each year, in the spring and the fall. The young are born in two types of nests—leaf nests and dens. The leaf nest is usually made of leaves and twigs that are placed in tree crotches and forked limbs. Dens are any cavity with an entrance of between four and five inches. The gestation period for fox squirrels is 45 days. A new-born baby weighs about half an ounce with its weight increasing to about two ounces by the end of the third week. Under parental care for about three months, the babies do not begin to venture out of the nest until their seventh or eighth week. At about the eleventh or twelfth week, the young begin to forage on the ground. Fox squirrels and grey squirrels do not interbreed and fox squirrels are monogamous.

Fox squirrels consume almost every kind of vegetable food that grows beneath the soil or in the treetops. Buried nuts, acorns, new buds of trees, beetles, other insects, tubers, bulbs, roots, eggs of birds and seeds of spring-fruiting trees are spring food sources. In the summer squirrels feed on berries, fruits, nuts, corn, grains and a wide variety of animal matter including larvae, pupae and adult insects. The supply of mast produced by oaks, beeches, magnolias, gums, dogwoods, hickories, pecans and other trees provides winter fare.

Natural predators of the fox squirrel—foxes, bobcats, weasels or owls—are at a disadvantage. Being a diurnal animal, the fox squirrel is not out when these creatures of the night are. However, some predation does occur, usually by hawks.

Photo by Maslowski Wildlife Production

from our PERSPECTIVE...

How 'Bout Them Oysters?

BY JACK COBURN ISAACS
LDWF Socioeconmics Section Economist

People around the nation frequently connect Louisiana to shrimp, crabs, redfish, red snapper, and a variety of other popular seafood delicacies. It is less common, in the public's imagination, to associate Louisiana with oysters, but the market's association between oysters and the Pelican State is very real.

In almost every one of the past 20 years or so, Louisiana has been the country's leading producer of oysters in the country, especially since the decline of the Chesapeake Bay oyster fishery. In a typical year, over one fourth of all the oysters harvested in the U.S. come from our coastal waters. Throughout the 1990s, the state's average annual harvest was over 11 million pounds. According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, 1999 Louisiana 12.1 million commercial oyster landings totaled valued at $25,776,785, almost 27 percent of the national total. Similarly in 2000, Louisiana provided 11.5 million pounds of oysters, worth an estimated $24 million, or 28 percent of the nation's oyster harvest.

Of all the commercial marine species harvested in Louisiana, oysters are fourth in value, behind shrimp, menhaden, and crabs. Oysters were responsible for over 10 percent of the value of all shellfish and over seven percent of all the seafood landed in Louisiana in 1999.

The oyster fishery employs over 1,700 oystermen, primarily in the southeastern portion of the state. Commercial oystermen work hundreds of thousands of acres of productive oyster grounds, both privately and publicly held, all along the Gulf Coast. Most oysters are harvested in Plaquemines, Terrebonne, St. Bernard, and Lafourche parishes where the fresh waters of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya combine with the saltwater of the Gulf, creating prime conditions for these meaty mollusks.

Oystermen lease over 400,000 acres of water bottoms from the state at a cost of $2 per acre per year usually for a 15-year term. Each oysterman who leases water bottoms has an incentive to protect and preserve its shellfish resources the way a farmer cares for the long term health of his land. Unless otherwise restricted, oystermen may harvest and sell oysters from their own leases at any time during the year.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries maintains 14 oyster seed grounds, seed reservations, and public tonging ares within state waters. Access to these areas is available to anyone with a recreational or commercial fishing license and the appropriate gear license (tonging or dredging) during the season that normally stretches from September through April. Recreational fisherman may harvest up to two sacks per personal per day for personal consumption. Commercial oystermen may harvest oysters for resale from public grounds provided they measure at least three inches or more from hinge to beak across. Oysters smaller than market size are known as seed oysters and may be transported from public reefs to private leases where they are cultivated to larger or more marketable sizes. Although private grounds have historically provided over three-quarters of the oysters sold in the state, in recent times, private leases produce just over half of the total oyster harvest.

In addition to generating income and employment, oyster reefs also play a valuable ecological role. The hard, jagged oyster reefs provide food, shelter, and habitat for countless species of fish, mollusks, and other sea creatures. Although some of these species, like the predacious oyster drill, black drum, and crabs, can seriously damage oyster populations, most of the species live in relative peace and harmony with their shellfish hosts.

Fishermen, aware of the great quantity and variety of fish around oyster reefs, are drawn to these sites. Every year thousands of sportsmen and women head out specifically to fish in the bountiful waters associated with oyster beds. The oyster, then, generates income not only for the oysterman who harvests the shellfish, but also to the bait and tackle shops, boat dealerships, and marinas that serve these fishermen.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Department of Health and Hospitals monitor and maintain Louisiana's oyster reefs to ensure continued public health and the health and plenitude of these precious resources. The benefits of these efforts are enjoyed by consumers, anglers, and oystermen, not to mention the fish and wildlife that call oyster beds their homes.

Photography Showcase

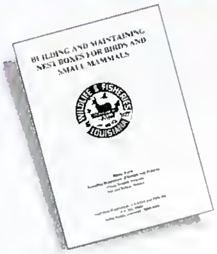
Natural Habitat: Sunset over the Gulf of Mexico
Photo by
Ron Johnson
Lake Charles

Hunting & Fishing: Beau-Jangles' Harvest at Bay Harbeau
Photo by
Willie Rollins
Morgan City

Louisiana Species:
Pencil Flower &
Goldenrod Spider
Photo by
Nelson "Cal" Allain
Port Allen

Natural Habitat:
Sunrise at Biloxi WMA
Photo by
William W. Stoffle
Metairie

LOUISIANA Conservationist



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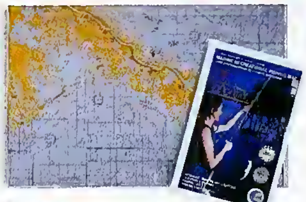

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#3 Lake Pontchartrain to Chandeleur Sound
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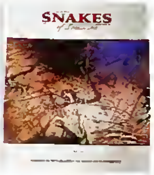

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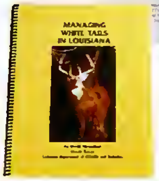

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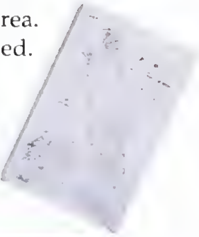

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Wildlife
MANAGEMENT AREA

MAUREPAS SWAMP

Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area, owned and managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), is located south of Lake Maurepas in St. John the Baptist, St. James and Ascension parishes. The 64,000-acre area was donated in 2001 to LDWF by the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with assistance from The Conservation Fund, based in Arlington, Virginia. The donation of this tract will insure that Louisiana citizens will always have a place to participate in outdoor recreation activities.

Established in 1947, the Mellon Foundation has a long-standing commitment to conservation. Since 1977, it has made major grants and gifts for conservation, primarily in the areas of land acquisition, wetlands protection and wildlife preservation. The Mellon Foundation, with the assistance of The Conservation Fund, has previously added more than 3,700 acres of wetlands to wildlife refuges in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. The foundation's gifts to Louisiana over the past decade total almost 76,000 acres. The Conservation Fund provides technical assistance to the foundation on identification, purchase and disposition of conservation land acquired through the foundation's American Land Conservation Program.

The complex wetland system that comprises the WMA is dominated by baldcypress and tupelogum swamp. The south Maurepas swamp area is a major coastal wetland and one of the largest remaining tracts of coastal freshwater swamp in Louisiana. The swamp is characterized by the predominance of baldcypress and tupelogum. Drummond red maple, pumpkin ash, green ash, black willow, black gum and various other hardwood trees can also be found.

The new area is home to a variety of wildlife species including both game and non-game. White-tailed deer, waterfowl, squirrel and rabbits are the primary game species. At one time, the tract was one of the best waterfowl hunting areas in the state. However, salvinia, an aquatic pest, has become established in this vast wetland system and has impacted the habitat. Fur species such as raccoons and nutria are abundant. Different species of ibis, herons, and egrets can be found on the area. Alligators are abundant on the area and alligator season is open. Bald eagles visit the area and five nest sites have been documented.

Blind River, Mississippi Bayou, Dutch Bayou and several smaller waterways transect the area and offer a scenic view. Blind River is listed as a Natural and Scenic River. This special designation gives certain protection to the river.

Commercial timber harvest of the area began in the early 1900s. Commercial timber harvest in this area was accelerated with the invention of pullboat logging. Visible scars left from this destructive type of harvest remain. A second growth of baldcypress and tupelogum has become established over most of the property. Other activities including oil and gas production also occur on the area.

Construction of the Mississippi River levee in the early 1900s hydrologically isolated the Maurepas swamp. The levee system prevents introduction of new sediments, nutrients and freshwater into the adjacent wetlands. As a result, the wetlands in this area have become stressed due to a myriad of factors including saltwater intrusion. Currently, a diversion project under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act is being planned to bring freshwater and sediment into the system via the Hope Canal. The goal is to ultimately improve the growing conditions, decrease subsidence and conserve this important ecosystem. The Department will be working closely with other resource agencies in monitoring impacts of the diversion project.

The area is ideally located between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. A wide range of public outdoor recreational opportunities including but not limited to hunting, fishing, birding, and boating will be available. The Department is in the process of evaluating the area and plans to provide adequate staff to meet the management needs.

All users are required to utilize the new daily self-clearing permits available at self- clearing stations strategically located on the area. Hunters between the age of 18-59 are required to have the WMA permit. Rules, regulations and season dates can be found in the hunting reason pamphlet available from the Department or license vendors.

Access to the area is limited to boats. Airboats are not allowed. However, outboard motors and go-devils will be allowed. Boat launches are located along Highway 61 into the Reserve Relief Canal. The St. James Boat Club launch located off Interstate 10 and the Blind River is another place to access the area.

Maps for the new area are available at the local Region offices and on the internet at www.wlf.state.la.us.

LAW lines

BY MAJOR KEITH LACAZE

Be Careful Out There

Hunting season is the busiest time of year for wildlife enforcement agents. Deer, waterfowl and small game seasons are in full swing. Thousands of hunters are afield. Complaints and reports of illegal activity come pouring in and everyone the agent meets has questions about the regulations. Supervisory officers tend to pull out what hair they have left trying to figure out overtime and how to be in fifty trouble spots with fifteen agents.

It is enough of a challenge to patrol the district but the job is further complicated by the rising number of accidents, lost hunters and tragic deaths which occur every year.

Anyone can meet with accident or disaster but the odds for survival are in favor of those who are prepared. Let's take a look at facts from some true to life accidents. Perhaps we can learn from these unfortunate people and their mistakes.

A few years ago a hunter decided to out alone and check on a ladder stand left in the woods from the previous season. It was September and time to prepare for bow season. He parked his truck and walked the better part of a mile to the stand. Upon arrival he climbed the stand and began pulling away limbs and vines.

The disturbance got an immediate response from wasps nested under the seat of the stand. The stinging attack caused the hunter to release his grip and fall, breaking his leg. The break was just above the ankle and so severe the bone protruded through the skin and the rubber boot he was wearing. Alone, bleeding, in what surely must have been extreme pain and going into shock, the man was faced with the task of getting back to his truck.

Walking or hobbling was out of the question. He crawled out on hands and knees, through palmettos, in country known for the size of the rattlesnakes. He then got in the truck and drove back to civilization.

He very nearly lost the leg due to infection but eventually made a complete recovery. An iron will to survive and a toughness most people today do not even imagine brought him through.

One December, wildlife agents responded to a late night call from the sheriff's office requesting assistance in finding two missing hunters. The hunters were young men who had gone duck hunting earlier in the day on a large lake. The missing men had gone to a duck blind far from shore in a small boat. The boat was loaded with the usual duck hunting gear which means they were carrying a lot of weight.

When they failed to return home or call well after dark concerned family members sought help. The location of the blind was well known. Investigating officers found the blind. The boat was missing but some gear and clothes were found inside. The search started in earnest at daylight. The body of the one of the men, wearing a life vest, was found floating in the lake between the blind and the lake shore. The search for the other man continued for several days. Before it was over divers and searchers working in boats and aircraft had covered every inch of terrain in the vast area.

Ultimately the other victim's body was found, also wearing a life vest and drifted far from where his companion's body had been located. The investigation revealed they had capsized and lost the boat in the process of trying to retrieve a duck. They had made it back to the blind where dry clothes and food were on hand. However, they made the fatal decision to put on life vests and swim for shore. Unfamiliar with cold water and hypothermia they succumbed to its lethal effects before making land.

A wildlife officer and good friend in Wyoming told the story of this unusual mishap. An elk hunter was successful in taking his quarry and began field dressing the animal. As anybody who has ever handled one knows, elk have very tough hide. A sharp knife is required for the chore of dressing and quartering.

The excited hunter rolled the elk on it's back and straddled the animal to open the abdomen. He inserted the knife and began pulling towards himself in an effort to slit the skin. He must have been pulling very hard on a dull knife when it slipped free of the skin and plunged into the man's groin, severing a major artery. The man went a few steps, collapsed and bled to death.

Accidents happen fast and always at the worst possible place and time. But proper planning and precaution can prevent many accidents or at least minimize the damage or threat to life.

If at all possible, avoid going out alone. Odds for survival are nearly doubled when two or more people are together in a bad situation. In the event of injury your partner can provide first aid and go for help.

Never leave on any trip without telling someone where you are going. Once in the field do not change your mind and go to a different location, particularly if you are alone. If something happens, search time can be reduced from days to minutes IF we know where to look. If you have a cell phone, bring it along.

Next, always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) or life vest when a boat is under way. Hunters who travel by boat in cold weather are typically wearing heavy clothing and waders. The weight, restriction of motion and shock of cold water entry mean almost certain death to anyone without a PFD. If you do go in the water, get out as quickly as possible, get to shelter and get into dry clothes. It is a good idea to carry dry clothing in a waterproof compartment in the fall and winter. Once sheltered and if possible dry, do not re-enter the water or try to swim for shore. Wait for rescue.

Use extreme caution when handling firearms, arrows, knives, climbing stands and any other gear that has the potential to injure you or someone else. Work slowly and carefully when using such equipment. After the shot, wait until the excitement has passed and allow yourself some time to settle down before climbing from an elevated stand and before field dressing game. Avoid using equipment which is not in good condition. What grandpa told you about a dull knife cutting you quicker than a sharp one is absolutely true.

Hunting season should be a time for fun and excitement anticipated with great delight. It should not be a time to remember tragedy or the loss of a loved one due to a needless accident. Carefully plan each outing and be sure to bring emergency equipment and a first aid kit.

Meeting hunters on brisk fall mornings to hear good hunting stories is much preferred to meeting at dusk to form a search party.

CONSERVATION notes

TURKEY SEASON DATES SET

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission decided Oct. 4 to move up the proposed statewide opening date of the 2002 turkey season from March 30 to March 23, in response to public comments regarding season dates proposed in August. Since the season would open a week earlier in each of the three turkey hunting areas, it would also close a week earlier than originally proposed, and season dates for wildlife management areas would be adjusted accordingly.

Tom Prickett, wildlife division administrator for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, told commissioners that available LDWF data did not indicate there would be any adverse impacts on turkey populations as a result of the changes.

Area A would have a 30-day season (March 23, 2002 – April 21, 2002). Area B would have a 23-day season (March 23, 2002 – April 14, 2002). Area C would have a 9-day season (March 23–31, 2002). The daily bag limit will remain one gobbler, with a season limit of two gobblers. The changes will be reflected when the commission ratifies season dates in December, subject to further public comment and deliberation in the interim.

MARINA IN HOUMA PROVIDES PUMPOUT SERVICE

A new public boat sewage disposal facility, constructed in part with federal Clean Vessel Act funds, is now available at the recently completed Downtown Marina in Houma. The facility will help meet the needs of both recreational boaters from the Houma area and transient boaters passing through the state on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), according to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries economist Herb Holloway,.

“Located at the intersection of Bayou Terrebonne and the GIWW, Downtown Marina’s sewage disposal facility provides a vital service to the many boaters who utilize the GIWW,” noted Holloway. “As part of our continuing efforts to provide convenient sewage disposal for recreational boaters throughout the state, LDWF is pleased that the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government chose to include boat sewage disposal equipment in the plans for this beautiful marina.”

N.W.T.F. "WOMEN IN THE OUTDOORS" EVENT HELD OCT. 13

Helping women learn more about outdoor activities such as fishing, canoeing and shooting sports was the focus of an all-day workshop Saturday, Oct. 13 in Baton Rouge. The third annual Women in the Outdoors was sponsored by local chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF).

Participants attended four of the 15 hands-on courses offered--two during the morning and two during the afternoon. The lineup included canoeing, basic fishing, a mock turkey hunt, archery and archery hunting, fly fishing, fly tying, hiking and outdoor skills, navigating by map and compass, shotgun skills and safety, .22 rifle skills and safety, self-defense, safe use of all-terrain vehicles, primitive cooking, creating backyard wildlife habitats and crafting dreamcatchers.

"The goal of Women in the Outdoors is to get more women involved in outdoor activities and help them understand the relationship between hunting and conservation, said Beth Rives, event coordinator.

STATE DUCK, GOOSE CALLING CONTEST HELD

The 33rd annual Louisiana Wildlife Federation State Duck and Goose Calling Contest was held Saturday, Oct. 20 at Waddill Wildlife Refuge and Outdoor Education Center, located at 4142 N. Flannery Road in Baton Rouge. The event, conducted by the Baton Rouge Sportsmen's League, featured waterfowl callers from around the state.

Contest categories were blue/snow goose, specklebelly, duck, and mouth/voice calling for geese. Both male and female callers will competed together in three divisions: adult (age 17 and older), intermediate (ages 14-16) and junior (under age 14). The voice/mouth calling category was an open contest with no age divisions.

RIBBON-CUTTING HELD FOR ALLIGATOR EXHIBIT AT LAKE CHARLES CIVIC CENTER

The Louisiana Fur and Alligator Advisory Council held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Oct. 18 to mark the opening of a 10-foot alligator diorama at the Lake Charles Civic Center. The museum quality exhibit explains the role of the alligator industry in preserving a species (the alligator), a habitat (wetlands), a culture and a way of life. It includes six panels of photographs, information about wetland conservation, a display of alligator products and a nest scene that features several taxidermied hatchling alligators emerging from eggs.

"It is important to educate the public that alligators are not endangered, but are a renewable resource here in Louisiana," noted Darrell Dupont, chairman of the council. "By purchasing alligator products, we put money back into our wetlands and help preserve the habitat needed for alligators' long-term survival."

The mission of the Louisiana Fur and Alligator Advisory Council is to promote the conservation and management of Louisiana's fur and alligator resources.

WILLAMETTE CONTRIBUTIONS RECOGNIZED BY GOVERNOR

Gov. M. J. "Mike" Foster, Jr. presented a plaque to officials from Willamette Industries during an Oct. 2 ceremony at the Governor's Mansion in Baton Rouge recognizing the company's long-standing commitment to conservation. The event commemorated the 50th anniversary of the dedication of Jackson-Bienville Wildlife Management Area in Bienville, Jackson and Lincoln parishes.

Leased to the state at no charge since 1951, Jackson-Bienville WMA comprises 32,460 acres of pine-covered hills Willamette Industries owns 32,000 of those acres, which are prime territory for deer and turkey hunting.

2001 TEAL SEASON HARVEST 'BELOW AVERAGE'

Despite a series of cool fronts, which should have provided an abundance of teal and ensured a good season, the 2001 teal season harvest appears to have been below the average of the past several years, according to Robert Helm, LDWF state waterfowl study leader. Few concentrations of teal were noted and overall numbers of teal appeared low statewide during the 16-day season.

"This year, water levels in the southwest coastal marshes were extremely high and there was an abundance of water in agricultural areas, particularly rice fields," noted Helm. "Teal are small birds, and typically prefer shallow water. Due to high water, the birds were more widely distributed this year. Some hunters had a good season, but overall the harvest was below average due to the lack of concentration of birds."

Last year, Louisiana teal hunters enjoyed high success in September, with a record 375,000 birds harvested last year. The September season is designed around early migrating blue-winged teal, which comprise more than 90 percent of all teal harvested in Louisiana.

The fourth and last article in the series on the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' history will be published in the March/April 2002 *Louisiana Conservationist Magazine.*

Pictured, left to right, are Clint Scott, Willamette Industries district manager; Steve Barham, Willamette area resource manager; LDWF Assistant Secretary Phil Bowman; LDWF Secretary James H. "Jimmy" Jenkins Jr.; Gov. M.J. "Mike" Foster Jr.; Ed Smith, Willamette forest operations regional manager; Wayne Parker, Willamette Southern Building Materials Group vice president; Carrol Cochran, Willamette landowner assistance manager; Tom Prickett, LDWF wildlife division administrator; and George Trevison, Willamette district forester.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication title: Louisiana Conservationist
2. Publication No.: 246778
3. Filing date: 9/27/01
4. Issue frequency: bi-monthly
5. No. of issues published annually: 6
6. Annual subscription rate: $12
7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808
8. Complete mailing address of headquarters of general business office of publisher: 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808
9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808; Editor, Janice Collins, 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808; Managing Editor, Marianne Marsh Burke, 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808.
10. Owner: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (nonprofit) 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808; mailing address, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898; no stockholders.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none.
12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose pose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: has not changed during the preceding 12 months.
13. Publication name: Louisiana Conservationist
14. Issue date for circulation data below: 11/1/01
15. Extent and nature of circulation:

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B.Paid and/or requested circulation:

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C.Total paid and/or requested circulation *(sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2)*: 27,500

D.Free distribution by mail *(samples, complimentary and other free)*:none

E. Free distribution outside the mail *(carriers or other means)*:none

F.Total free distribution *(sum of 15d and 15c)* none

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B. Paid and/or requested circulation:

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C.Total paid and/or requested circulation *(sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2)* 26,387

D.Free distribution by mail *(samples, complimentary and other free)*: none

E. Free distribution outside the mail *(carriers or other means)*: none

F.Total free distribution *(sum of 15d and 15e)* none

G.Total distribution *(sum of 15c and 15f)*: *26,387*

H.Copies not distributed:

1. office use, leftovers, spoiled 1,000

2. return from news agents none

I.Total *(sum of 15g, 15h(1) and 15h(2)* 27,500

Percent paid and/or requested circulation: 100

16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the Nov/Dec 2001 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and title of editor: Janice Collins,Editor

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions *(including fines and imprisonment)* and/or civil sanctions *(including multiple damages and civil penalties).*

Photography Showcase

This section will display photographs submitted by our readers. One photograph from each category is selected by our staff and showcased in each issue. This is not a contest but a selection of photographs that show originality, uniqueness and creativity. Selected photographers will receive a Louisiana Conservationist one-year subscription gift certificate which can be used to start a new subscription, extend an existing one or given as a gift.

GUIDELINES

All entries not following the guidelines will be returned unused.

1. Anyone who can operate a camera can enter. Wildlife and Fisheries employees and immediate family members are not eligible.
2. Black and white, color transparencies and color prints are acceptable. All prints must have an accompanying negative. Do not cut the negative send the entire strip.
3. Prints must be mounted on sturdy poster or matt board.
4. Name, address, phone number and age must be included with or written on each entry. Unlabeled entries will be returned unused.
5. Include a description and location of each photograph. Specify appropriate category.
6. Only first time published photographs should be submitted.

DEADLINES

January 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, Sept. 1

All photographs will be returned.

CATEGORIES

A. Natural Habitats: scenic shots of Louisiana. These may or may not include wildlife or people.

B. Louisiana species: native species of Louisiana. This includes plants and animals.

C. People in Nature: People involved in outdoor activities other than hunting and fishing.

D. Hunting & Fishing: People enjoying Louisiana's oldest outdoor sports.

Mail submissions to Louisiana Conservationist Showcase, Third Floor, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898

C'est Bon!

from the

Official Louisiana Seafood and Wild Game Cookbook

Candied Louisiana Yams

6 medium Louisiana yams, parboiled in skins
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup water
1/2 stick butter
1/4 cup pecans, minced
Dash cinnamon

Boil yams until almost tender when pricked with fork. Let cool and peel. Place in baking dish. Blend next six ingredients and cook over low heat until slightly thickened. Pour over yams and bake approximately 30 minutes in a moderate 350 degree oven.

Venison Stroganoff

1 lb. venison steak, cut in thin strips
1 onion
1 1/2 cup water
1/4 cup button mushrooms
3 Tbl. flour
salt and pepper
1 cup tomato juice
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 cup sour cream

Dredge meat with flour and salt and pepper. Brown lightly in fat with the onion. Add tomato juice, water sugar. Simmer until tender. Ten minutes before serving, add mushrooms, sour cream. Serves 4.

Baked Squirrel

2 squirrels, cut up
Flour
Salt and pepper
Oil
2 onions, sliced in rings
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
1/2 cup green onions and parsley

Coat squirrel pieces with flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Brown in oil and remove from skillet. Line baking dish with foil and place cooked squirrel in dish. Add onion, garlic and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Blend soup with a small amount of water; pour over squirrel. Seal foil tightly. Bake at 325 degrees for 2 hours. Open foil and add green onions and parley, reseal and cook for additional 10 or 15 minutes. Serves 2 to 4.

Whiskey Pecan Cake

6 eggs
1 lb. sugar
1/2 lb. butter
1 lb. pecan halves
1 lb. dates (optional)
1 whole nutmeg
1/2 pint whiskey
1 lb. flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1 lb. seedless raisins
8 ozs. candied cherries

Cover raisins with water overnight. Drain well. Cream butter and sugar, add eggs and mix well. Combine flour and baking powder. Add flour mixture to creamed ingredients alternately with whiskey; blend thoroughly. Add pecans, raisins, nutmeg and dates. Bake in a tube pan 4 hours at 300 degrees. Cool for ten minutes in pan before turning out on rack.

Photo by David Humphreys

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